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RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1815
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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1338
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1702

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000522

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: ACCUSED "WAHHABIS" DETAIL TORTURE IN DETENTION,
TRIAL MONITORS INTIMIDATED

Classified By: AMB. JON R. PURNELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Eight defendants being tried on religious extremism charges in Tashkent have openly testified that investigators beat and otherwise intimidated them into signing confessions. Such charges have rarely been raised in open court sessions in the past. A defendant's mother told trial monitors that police threatened her with rape to extract incriminating testimony from her. One trial monitor's husband has been attacked on the street, and another monitor abducted, in an apparent attempt at intimidation. End summary.

GRAPHIC REPORTS OF ABUSE IN DETENTION

¶2. (C) In the first week of March, the Tashkent Province Criminal Court began hearing the case of eight young men accused of involvement in an Islamic extremist group, a crime punishable by five to 15 years imprisonment. Post does not know on what evidence prosecutors have based the accusation, but it is clear that the case rests largely on written confessions that the defendants signed in pre-trial detention. Several of the accused testified in their opening statements that their confessions were coerced under torture or severe intimidation.

¶3. (C) A Human Rights Watch (HRW) monitor said that on March 9, the trial's second day, defense attorney Abdumalik Jalilov asked Judge Hayruddin Shermukhamedov to investigate the claim that police officers threatened and intimidated the defendants in pre-trial detention. In subsequent sessions, the defendants themselves gave specific and graphic information. On March 13, one defendant testified that an investigator threatened to sodomize him with a baton, and that officers beat another defendant in front of him to coerce him to sign a confession. On March 14, defendant Mansur Holikov testified that investigators undressed him, punched and kicked him, and demanded that he confess to being a member of a "Wahhabi" group. Holikov also told the court that he was beaten until unconscious on several occasions. A third defendant, Alisher Tulaganov, said that he only signed a confession because an officer beat him in the neck and threatened him. Tulaganov also testified that investigators interrogated him without his attorney present, and showed him two other defendants who had been seriously beaten, to illustrate what would happen to him if he did not confess.

¶4. (C) HRW reported that defendants' families have also been intimidated and coerced into signing incriminating statements. One defendant's mother reportedly said that she

was summoned to an office of the National Security Service (NSS) for questioning, and that officers demanded she sign an affidavit admitting "involvement with politics." When she initially refused to sign, an officer reportedly threatened to have her raped by police officers.

THE BENEFITS, AND COSTS, OF TRIAL MONITORING

¶5. (C) Aside from HRW, several local human rights activists have also monitored the trial. According to HRW, the presence of monitors has made a tangible difference in the conduct of the trial, and the judge has shown "a meticulous commitment to procedural nuances rarely seen." However, during examination of the defendants' claims of abuse, the judge reportedly assumed an aggressive tone, harshly questioning the defendants' integrity and demanding that they explain why they changed their testimony from the original written statements that they signed during the investigation, and why they did not speak out earlier about the alleged abuse.

¶6. (C) The common law husband of one trial monitor, Elena Uralyeva, was beaten unconscious on March 15 as he waited to meet Uralyeva at a bus stop near their home. He has since been hospitalized with a concussion, and reported that the assailant did not steal anything from him. One of Uralyeva's associates, an activist with the Free Farmers (Ozod Dehqonlar) opposition party, was reportedly abducted on the morning of March 17 in front of Uralyeva's home. HRW has characterized both actions as attempts at intimidation.

¶7. (C) Comment: This trial, along with a similar one taking

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place in another part of Tashkent, is among the first non-Andijon-related religious extremism trials to take place since September 2005. The defendants' open allegations of torture are unusual, as defendants in previous religious extremism trials have not for the most part discussed abuse in detention. When pre-trial torture has been alleged in the past, judges have rarely investigated the claims. Violent intimidation of trial monitors is also a disturbing departure from ordinary GOU practice.

PURNELL